

Kentucky Injury Prevention and Research Center

Kentucky Injury Facts



Child Passenger Safety Week
is February 11-17, 2001

January 2001

**Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for Kentucky children ages 1-17.
Many deaths and injuries could be prevented by buckling up our children correctly!**

- Babies under age 1 need to ride facing **rear** for best protection in a crash. Babies under 1 year who outgrow infant seats should progress to a **rear**-facing convertible seat. Convertible seats currently manufactured are good rear-facing until at least 30 pounds. Check recalls and instructions carefully when using seats that are not purchased new. To secure the child in the seat, a 5-point harness system is recommended over T-shields or tray-shields. Harness straps should be at or below the infant's shoulders (usually bottom or middle slots on convertible seats -- check instructions). **Never** place a rear-facing seat in front of a passenger side air bag.
- After age 1 and 20 pounds the best protection is a forward facing car seat with a 5-point harness system. Be sure to move the harness to the top slots when you turn the seat to face forward, as only that slot is reinforced to withstand a crash when facing forward.
- Toddlers should stay in a car seat until 1) ears are above the top of the car seat, or 2) shoulders are above the top harness slot, or 3) weight is above 40 pounds (check instructions for limit).
- Children who are too big for one of the first 2 reasons, but still less than 40 pounds will get the best protection in a combination forward-facing/booster seat. These are booster seats with a 5-point harness system. They can be used with the harness system just like a forward facing car seat until your child reaches 40 pounds. For children between 40 and 60-80 pounds (check instructions for upper weight limit), use the seats as boosters by removing the harness system and using the vehicle seat belt. Always remove the harness system after the child reaches 40 pounds!
- Boost them before you buckle them! Although Kentucky law only requires children to be in car seats until they are 40 inches tall, this is only a minimum and **not** a safety guideline. Children up to about 8 years or 80 pounds or 57 inches (4'9") should be in belt positioning booster seats until vehicle seat belts will fit properly and provide the best protection. Seat belts used without booster seats can cause severe internal injuries to small children in a crash because the lap belt is over their belly instead of hip bones. It's important to always wear the shoulder belt as well as the lap belt to protect the neck and spine; never let your child tuck the shoulder belt behind. Booster seats help position the shoulder belt properly over their collarbone instead of irritating the child's neck. **Be sure to buckle up on every trip!**

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Kentucky Injury Facts is an ongoing series which describes preventable injuries in the Commonwealth. This information can be used as a guide for injury prevention programs, legislative initiatives, and policy development to ensure the health and safety of Kentuckians. Please share this information with others who may benefit from it.

Kentucky Injury Prevention and Research Center (KIPRC)
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